



March 3, 2015
Support for H.B No. 6824
Early Childhood Community Plans Funding

Testimony of the Co-Chairs of Hamden's Partnership for Young Children:

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This testimony is to request that the funding from the Office of Early Childhood to local communities for Early Childhood Community Plans, be reinstated. As active members of the Hamden Community, co-chairs of Hamden's Partnership for Young Children (Hamden's Early Childhood Council) and professionals involved with improving outcomes for young children and their families, we know first-hand the importance of Hamden's early childhood collaborative. The state funding of \$900,000 would be matched by \$1,000,000 in private funding. The loss of this funding would have a significant impact on all of the communities currently invested in this work.

While the description of this line item in the budget is "Early Childhood Community Plans", Hamden's Partnership for Young Children and all of the local councils across the state are much more than a plan. The local collaboratives bring together a wide range of unconnected programs and organizations which impact the health, development, care and early education of young children with these efforts involving parents as well as professionals. Hamden's Partnership for Young Children has representatives from 26 organizations/programs, many of whom have connected only thru the work of this collaborative.

Accomplishments of the Hamden Partnership for Young Children include:

- Expanding the number of school readiness slots in Hamden and securing funding for a second Family Resource Center. The energy and attention given to early childhood issues through the Partnership efforts has increased the community's awareness of the needs of Hamden's young children and their families along with the connection to the wide achievement gap in the older grades.

- Serves as a mechanism to apply for and manage grant funds that serve multiple early childhood providers in a coordinated way. The United Way of Greater New Haven has been funding the Partnership for nearly a decade to implement a range of programs with the goal of improving outcomes for young children. This year a \$31,000 grant is supporting 12 classrooms regarding early numeracy and literacy.

The impact on Hamden's Partnership for Young Children if funding is eliminated:

- There will be fewer cross program/organization collaborations without Hamden's Partnership to pull together the early childhood community and serve as the "glue". Joint efforts with the Family Resource Center, Adult Ed, public and private providers and the public library, to name a few, allow for more efficient and effective implementation of interventions. It is thru the Partnership that the connections are made, relationships built, data collected and analyzed, strategies tested and evaluated.

- The Partnership has worked closely with the Hamden Public schools, bringing an increased awareness of the issues involved in programs and services for children ages birth to five. With the Partnership's lead, we have worked together to analyze the preschool experiences of entering kindergarten, improved the transition to kindergarten process and are working to better align preschool and kindergarten teaching strategies. Eliminating funding for the Partnership would bring an end to most of those efforts.

To reiterate, the local early childhood councils are dynamic entities which examine and address a wide range of issues facing young children and their families. With the elimination of funding, only a small group would remain to oversee the School Readiness grants. The comprehensive efforts at systems change regarding early care and education at the local level would become marginalized.